

Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Ms K Poyser
Planning and Building Control
North Hertfordshire District Council
PO Box 480
Herts
M33 0DE

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

1st March 2019 (by email)

Dear Ms. Poyser,

Application No 19/00346/OP

Outline application for residential development comprising of five dwellings including access and amenities following demolition of existing dwelling (all matters reserved except means of access) at Trees, London Road, Langley, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 7PQ

CPRE Hertfordshire have concerns regarding this proposal for residential development in the Green Belt.

We appreciate the applicant's view that as the site is surrounded by commercial enterprises it should be considered as brownfield. However, this is the result of historical decisions on the surrounding land and does not remove the Green Belt designation of the current site.

Under the saved Green Belt policies in the current North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2, this proposed development would be inappropriate and hence the applicant would be required to demonstrate very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the resulting harm to the Green Belt. The applicant presents no very special circumstances.

Paragraph 145(g) of the National Planning Policy Framework allows limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. This is replicated in the emerging Local Plan, which has yet to be adopted.

We accept the Applicant's assertion that this site can be considered as previously developed under NPPF 145(g). However it is a debatable point whether or not the proposal will have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The current use of the site consists of a single bungalow and a number of outbuildings, with a

cumulative footprint of 393 sq. m. The overall footprint of the proposed development of 5 dwellings is 568 sq. m. This represents a proposed increase of 44%. However the applicant asserts that there are permitted development rights which, if taken into account raises the current footprint to 644 sq. m., resulting in a reduction of 11%. Consequently, before determining the application, the Council will have to satisfy itself on the validity and extent of the permitted development rights.

We do not accept the assertion in the Planning, Design and Access Statement that “*a development of this type can be accommodated on this land with sufficient amenity land and parking.*” In our view the three units to the rear of the site (Units 2, 3, and 4) are unnecessarily close together and present a cramped appearance. The flank walls of Units 1 and 4 appear to be just over 1 metre from the site boundary, with, in the case of Unit 4, windows of habitable rooms looking out on to that boundary. This is unacceptable.

Our principal concern is regarding the sustainability of the proposal. The dwelling plans are a mixture of three and four bedroom properties, so presumably intended for family use. The site is in an isolated position, some distance from any facilities such as shops, schools and surgeries. The nearest towns accessed by London Road are Hitchin 3.2 miles to the north and Welwyn 5.6 miles to the south. There are no footways along those stretches of London Road and there is no bus service. The nearest railway stations are at Hitchin and Stevenage (4.5 and 6.2 miles respectively). Consequently the only viable access to and from the site is by car. This is contrary to the principles contained in Section 9 of the NPPF and in particular para. 108(b) which requires that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.

On balance, we urge the Council to reject this application in its current form.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving